

Destruction of the Granville Hilltop Fort, Licking County, Ohio

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In 1847, in addition to the famous "Opossum" or "Alligator" effigy mound at the east end of Granville, Licking County, E.G. Squier and E.H. Davis also described an interesting "fortified hill" about two miles east of Granville, within a half mile of "The Alligator". Squier and Davis' map of the site is reproduced in Figure 1.

This site was, until recently, located on the ridge immediately behind the residence at Bryn Du Farms, and in August, 1975, through the courtesy of Mrs. Sallie Jones Sexton, I was permitted to surface hunt the site. It was then high in corn and heavily overgrown with weeds. In places along the western edge of the hill, the wall and ditch of the enclosure were still discernible. No trace of the mounds or central enclosure were apparent. Results of the survey, in which every open space of ground was carefully scanned, were meager: one bipitted erratic cobble of acidic feldspar porphyry, a small sherd of Adena Plain pottery (crushed igneous rock temper) 5.6mm thick, and 27 flint chips (high quality Flint Ridge, 22; impure Vanport chert, 1; Upper Mercer flint, 3; unidentified, 1). Eleven of the Flint Ridge chips had been burned. Only one chip, a blocky spall of crinoidal Vanport chert showed evidence of use; one side of it had been used as a scraper.

Subsequent to the recent sale of Bryn Du Farms, this site has been cleared and leveled for housing construction. In July, 1977, Mr. Harold Keene, Newark, Ohio and the writer visited the site, immediately following a heavy rain. No trace of the mounds or enclosure remained, and much of the original surface had been covered with fill. Collecting under excellent surface conditions yielded only the following: one thick, crude blade of Upper Mercer flint showing slight use as an end scraper, five thin amorphous lamellar flakes of Flint Ridge flint showing slight use as scrapers, and 65 unutilized chips (Upper Mercer, 5; Flint Ridge, 56; unidentified, 4). Thirteen of the unutilized Flint Ridge flakes show evidence of burning. Chippage was most common on the highest part of the ridge, the locus of the mounds.

Squier and Davis' original description of this site provides few clues as to its cultural

identification. They note that "Unlike all other hill-works which have fallen under notice, the ditch occurs *outside* of the wall (though their map indicates that the reverse is true of the small circle occurring inside the fort). The two small mounds within the earth circle were found to contain "altars", which were covered with ashes, intermixed with small fragments of pottery. Squier and Davis believed that the earthwork was defensive and, noting that this is the only hill top fort to enclose a sacred circle, they concluded that "conceding what can hardly admit of doubt, that the minor structure had a sacred or superstitious origin, we must of necessity arrive at the conclusion that the altars of the ancient people sometimes accompanied their defences."

More to the point, the small amount of material retrieved from the Bryn Du Farms site strongly suggests that the mounds were Adena. Although aware that Adena Plain pottery can be confused with similar Middle and Late Woodland plain ceramics, I think that identification as Adena seems probable and is buttressed by the nature of the site (i.e., a "sacred circle" surrounding two of the mounds), the lack of Middle Woodland bladelets while other types of flake utilization are comparatively common, and by the site location on a hilltop, a mile away from Raccoon Creek. Although the nearby "Opossum" effigy mound has been assigned to the Hopewell culture on the basis of a piece of mica (Bernhart 1976), there is no compelling reason to accept this idea, especially since mica is relatively common in Adena mounds. Several Middle Woodland sites were discovered during the author's field survey of Raccoon Creek in 1975, but these are restricted to the glacial outwash terraces along the creek and are marked by more diagnostic items (bladelets, Mankers-like points, and Middle Woodland pottery) than mica.

REFERENCES

- Bernhardt, Jack E.
1976 A Preliminary Survey of Middle Woodland Prehistory in Licking County, Ohio. *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, Vol. 46, nos. 1-2, pp. 39-54.

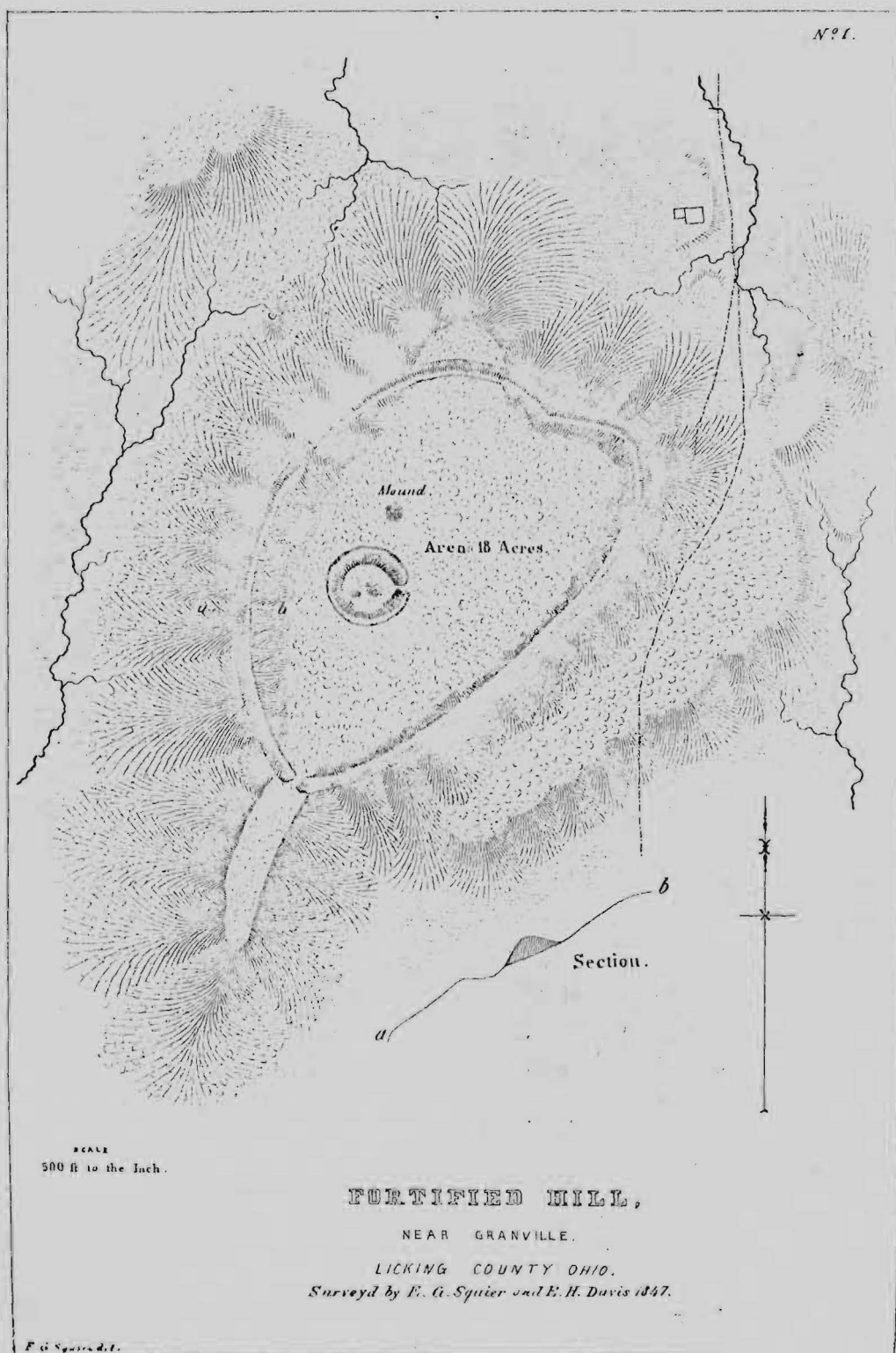


Fig. 1 Squier and Davis' (1847) map of the Bryn Du earthworks.